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[Bio](#)

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My grandfather's funeral was last week. Roger grew up poor on a Kansas farm, and for much of his life he was a teacher. A World War II veteran, his life was not unlike others of the Greatest Generation, in that he focused on serving others and doing what was asked of him. He did not have any land to leave his children. He didn't have significant financial assets to pass on to family members. But Roger left plenty of gifts. At his funeral, one person after another stood up to speak about what Roger had meant to them. So many people stood up, in fact, that the pastor eventually had to cut off the speakers to get us on to the cemetery and church luncheon.

Reflecting on his legacy, three particular gifts stand out. I hope you'll consider these offerings when thinking about the non-financial assets you will leave behind.

THE PRESENCE YOU PROVIDE

Roger was always concerned with other people. Whether it was a student, a church member or a neighbor, one of his family or friends, or a patient or a prisoner (he was a volunteer chaplain at the local hospital and jail), his focus was on the person in front of him and their needs and aspirations. This ability to be present with others was demonstrated in the prayers he said for other people: Whatever was happening in your life, it ended up as a blessing or concern in his prayer.

People knew that Roger paid attention to them. The minister at the funeral noted that even when Roger was in the hospital, visitors who came to encourage him left his room as the encouraged party. Even in poor health or pain, when the focus could easily have been on himself, his focus was on the visitor, the friend, the neighbor.

THE GUIDANCE YOU GIVE

When you focus on people through teaching or preaching, as Roger did, you invariably end up in a position to provide advice. And Roger did not hesitate to offer guidance. The counsel, however, was less about the specific action you should take, or the material decision to be made, but about the attitude you should have.

Roger offered advice about how you should think about your situation. How you should be thankful, or how you should appreciate the many blessings in your life. Or how you should approach your trials, as he did, with a Job-like appreciation for God's providence. Grandpa's guidance was less about solving a problem than it was your spiritual stance when confronted by obstacles. During his last years in the nursing home -- a place where loneliness and depression are all too common -- he continually told the staff "thank you" for their care of him. I hope I'm able to approach many difficult situations with such thankfulness.

THE INTERESTS YOU INSPIRE

One person who spoke at the funeral talked about how Roger inspired him to become a teacher. A Vietnam veteran spoke of Roger's challenge to him to be a leader for his family despite the trauma of the war. Others spoke of his influence on their agricultural career as the high school's FFA sponsor and the community college's irrigation instructor. His encouragement of people through mentoring clearly influenced the choices they made in life, and many of those choices, in turn, had an impact on even more people. He inspired others to realize their calling, and the gratitude people felt flowed like a river around and through our gathering to celebrate his life.



Lance Woodbury's grandfather Roger mentored and counseled dozens of people in his Kansas community over his lifetime. (Photo courtesy of the Woodbury family)

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Roger often said that he was thankful to have been born and to have lived during the greatest period of time in history. Roger's long legacy -- his gifts of presence, guidance and inspiration -- caused us all to feel that we had known a great man. Is there a more lasting legacy to leave those that survive you?

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Editor's note: Lance Woodbury writes family business columns for both DTN and our sister magazine, "The Progressive Farmer." He is a Garden City, Kansas, author, consultant and professional mediator with more than 20 years' experience specializing in agriculture and closely-held businesses. Email questions for this column to Lance@agprogress.com. Find all of DTN farm business columnists online at [https://www.dtnpf.com/...](https://www.dtnpf.com/)

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